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SUBJECT: OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL: STATEMENT ON RUSSIAN
NON-COMPLIANCE WITH GEORGIA CEASE-FIRE

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States reiterates its full support for the EU monitoring mission in Georgia. These observers -- together with the OSCE military monitoring officers -- play a potentially critical role in monitoring compliance with the six-point cease-fire agreement and its clarifying documents. We say "potentially critical" because it is clear that this is true only to the extent that these monitors are permitted access to all of Georgia -- including South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which we all know is currently not the case.

We note that under the August 12 cease-fire agreement, Russia committed to withdraw its forces to positions held prior to August 7. The follow-on agreement of September 8 reaffirmed this commitment. Instead of withdrawing, however, Russian forces continue to be deployed in both the South Ossetian and Abkhaz regions of Georgia in numbers far greater than those prior to the outbreak of hostilities, and certainly without the express consent of the sovereign host nation, Georgia. In addition, Russian forces continue to violate the commitments made in the August 12 and September 8 agreements by maintaining a presence outside the South Ossetian zone of conflict, in areas previously controlled by Georgia, particularly by remaining in the Akhalkalaki valley and in the Upper Kodori Gorge.

These areas must be demilitarized immediately, and human rights organizations and international observers must be allowed unimpeded access to the whole of Georgia, including its South Ossetian and Abkhazian regions. It is absolutely vital to monitor the situation of vulnerable civilian populations, investigate reports of human rights abuses by all parties to the conflict, including ongoing abuses, and ensure the safe and voluntary return of all those displaced by the conflict as well as their security upon their return. Such access is all the more important given the outlandish allegations of atrocities being made by some parties to the conflict. We need to know the objective facts, and the only way to accomplish this is through unfettered access.

(Contrary to what has been alleged here today,) the Government of Georgia is complying with the ceasefire agreement and has returned its armed forces to their bases. Additionally, Georgia is re-introducing the rule of law in the areas formerly occupied by Russian forces, rebuilding homes damaged by the conflict, re-establishing public order, and facilitating the return of internally displaced persons.

The United States once more calls on Russia to implement in their entirety the commitments it made in the six-point cease-fire agreement and its clarifying documents, and reminds Russia that it is responsible for safeguarding the population in the areas it occupies. Russia's continuing inability to ensure the protection of human rights and guarantee personal security in these areas underscores the crucial need for EU and OSCE monitors to have full and unimpeded access to the South Ossetian and Abkhazian regions of Georgia.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, the United States reiterates its commitment to the people of Georgia and their democratically elected government. We will continue to support Georgia's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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